MKULTRA, Frank Olson: Interview with the Family (WBAI, 1975) (Netflix 'Wormwood')

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The Olson family discusses Dr, Frank Olson, who was slipped some LSD by the CIA. - BROADCAST: WBAI, July 1975.

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from the Rockefeller Commission report the 22 years ago an army employee was given an after-dinner cordial at a meeting hosted by the CIA in Maryland that army employee did not know and was not told for 20 minutes that the after-dinner drink had acid LSD in it and one week later that employee was dead early in the morning very early about 1:30 in the morning in a hotel room in New York City he got up and before his CIA escort could prevent him he ran right through a closed hotel window which had the shades drawn over it the window gave way and the employee fell ten stories to his death well that account in the Rockefeller Commission report horrified most readers but we can only imagine what it did to a Maryland woman Alice Olsen and her two sons Eric Olsen and Neal's Olsen they had been told 22 years ago that Frank Olsen their husband and their father a civilian army employee working in Maryland at the Fort Dietrich biological warfare Research Center after leading a perfectly normal and happy life had inexplicably killed himself in New York they were not told anything about the LSD experiment that had set him off and until they read the Rockefeller Commission report 22 years afterwards last month they had spent two decades wracked with the guilt and the shame the suicide in a family causes we spoke to the Olsens this week Ted Clark one of our reporters here at the Washington bureau reached them at their home by phone and here is his conversation I'm talking to Nils Olsen and Frederick Maryland notes could you tell us briefly the story of your father's death and circumstances surrounding it midnight on November 28th 1953 as we understand it he had been given LSD without his now it's at a

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given LSD without his now it's at a meeting that was held with several CIA who were these on people between the CIA and the Army Research installation that my father worked for they were at a meeting discussing biological research and at during the week-long meeting in November of 53 they flipped him and five and four other top level scientists LSD after dinner one evening and then 20 minutes later they were told that they had been given the the LSD and they were going to be observed to see their reactions to the drug he developed two side effects to the to the drug and returned from the week-long meeting to our house my mother noticed very dramatic changes in his personality is being very despondent depressed and very quiet and so on then we went to work at Fort Detrick here in Frederick the following Monday and was considering resigning from his his job there was talk back into staying staying on and then Tuesday it was decided that he would go to see a psychiatrist up in New York City to see psychiatrists Harold Abram sentences name was a psychiatrist who had a security clamp and therefore was and we were told selected to be a therapist to torture my father because

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therapist to torture my father because my father had a top-level security clearance he talked with my father talk to us Abramson for several days during the week after he had been administered the LSD then the Friday night November 27th 1950 she tell us when my mother to indicate that he was doing okay that he'd be coming home on Saturday November 28th that was the last time that my mother talked to him then we received a phone call the next morning from a colleague who received a phone call from a CIA agent who was up in New York with my father accompany him and that was when we were notified that my father had funds to his death out of the 10th floor window of the hotel that was in New York where's any explanation given to you about why this had happened that he had been a participant in this experiment with LSD no we had no knowledge of that we haven't received any communication with whoever from the Central Intelligence Agency and the only thing we were told was that he jumped or fell from the tenth floor window and it was our understanding that he had just suffered suffered a nervous breakdown and good you know was very depressed and my mother believed that during the middle of the night he must have had a severe nightmare a bad dream something where he was just compelled to go to full run across the room hotel room and leap through a window at a closed window and the seats were drawn under windows so

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the seats were drawn under windows so that was all that we knew but he had prior to this time it had led a happy life and hadn't shown any signs of depression no he had not shown any signs my mother says that they had a very good marriage my father was a very loving person and very a very giving sort of person who loved his three children very much and spent quite a bit of time with us devoted a lot of energy it was his wife and children and that was the thing that tore through all of his friends is his wife and you know the three children was that we couldn't understand how he said after being you know being such a good warm stable sort of person the idea that he could suddenly develop a nervous breakdown was something we just put comprehend when when was it that you finally found out that he had been an unwitting participant in this LSD 2011 1975 we received a phone call from a friend [Music] information from Rockefeller Commission report indicating that from the information that they had stated in a report that could be no other person and our Father and then you have decided to take action against the suit the CIA that's correct what are you going to be doing number one be able to get full disclosure of the information really my brother on the phone here Bai

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really my brother on the phone here Bai in New York and two stations in California KPFA and KPFK yeah and we also have a station in Texas KPFT I was going to ask if you know of anybody else or if any of your father's colleagues who participated in the same experiment have you talked to any of them or do you know who they are and the material but it hasn't so far we promise not to oh we know who he is there were three others according to him one of them is dead we know there's two others are living and he refused to tell us the names of those well I think I have pretty much the whole storyi if you have any comments that you'd like to add there's one comment that I have I don't know what I know that this earlier view but today well to some degree during the press conference and especially after we are aware that what we do we go on through with a real funeral ceremony for our father and it was a funeral in the sense that we were

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was a funeral in the sense that we were honoring him signifying his death in a way that he couldn't be eulogized at the time you got because no one knew the true story serious proud of him the way he had died and it didn't fit with the kind of man that his friends family he was to be and there was a kind of feeling of what was happened today ceremony we also very powerful nothing you will see involved an attitude making an offensive meaning for the whole country ok Eric and Nell thank you very much for taking the time I know

you must be really tired here what's the third certificate rodeos worth it for Pacifica in Washington this is Robert Krulwich and with Ted Clarke Paz : kitty Ferguson and Paul Chaplin who contributed to this program wishing you a good evening

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